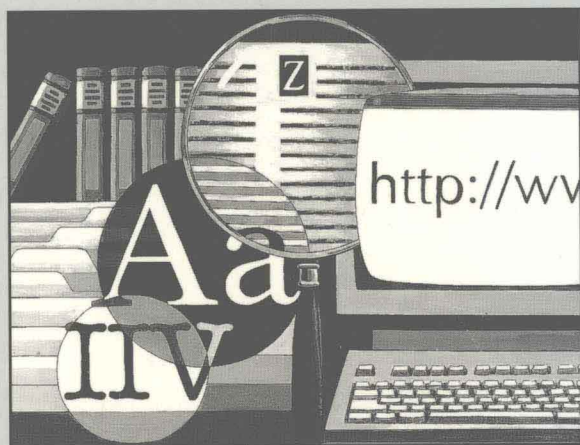


INTRODUCTION TO

*Reference  
Work*

VOLUME II



REFERENCE SERVICES  
AND  
REFERENCE PROCESSES

WILLIAM A. KATZ

SEVENTH EDITION

# INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE WORK

*Volume II*   **Reference Services  
and Reference Processes**

*Seventh Edition*

***William A. Katz***

State University of New York at Albany

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**INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE WORK, Volume II**

*Reference Services and Reference Processes*

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# PREFACE

The goal of *Introduction to Reference Work Volume II, Reference Services and Reference Processes*, is to give the reader a more thorough overview and a broader understanding of the possibilities of reference services than could be encompassed in Volume I, *Basic Information Sources*. This second volume introduces the reader to the more sophisticated, imaginative, and, some think, more interesting aspects of the complete reference process. Another purpose is to indicate the ongoing and important changes and developments in information technologies.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

Almost everything in this edition is new, not simply revised from the sixth edition. The decision was necessary because of new technologies and the evolution in the practice and theory of reference services. In the sixth edition, for example, there was a single chapter on networks. In this edition there are two chapters in a section given over to the subject, as well as related chapters on the Internet and on document delivery.

The information highway, and its many off- and on-ramps, is in the process of global construction. If today there is an Internet, tomorrow there will be numerous versions of the famous network. If today the network is primarily employed in finding data, tomorrow it may be the key to searching all reference materials in full text. Networking will bring reference works to the home and, in the process, is likely to change the professional duties of the reference librarian. All of this is discussed in detail in Chapters 2 through 5.

A primary problem in any text of this type is the rapid change in infor-

mation delivery. It is pointless, for example, to explain in detail how to reach point “c” and “d” on the Internet. Tomorrow the points of reference, the methods, will have changed with new networks, new hardware, and new software. Conversely, it is important to recognize the far-reaching implications of networking, if not the specifics of how to find this or that bit of datum. And it is to that purpose the second section was written, as well as most of the remainder of this second volume.

The second volume is a pragmatic, practical approach to information sources and theory. Basic developments are covered and explained. The footnotes and “Suggested Reading” sections guide those who wish to explore further. Leaders and followers in research and information science are responsible for much of what is revolutionary in reference services today. There are other courses, other places where information science can be considered in depth; all that can be done here is to hint at the joy of the intellectual fields open to the information scientist and researcher.

## PLAN OF THE BOOK

The text opens with a discussion of traditional and new reference services in the community. Here the word *community* embraces almost every situation from the typical middle-class public library to the library serving the special needs of equally special groups of users. Problems and possible solutions are considered, especially in terms of limitations of budget and the new technologies. Enough is offered to suggest, if only in the broadest way, the people a librarian serves and hopes to serve. What was Chapter 2 in the previous text is now incorporated, although almost entirely rewritten, in the present Chapter 1.

The second chapter is entirely new to this text. It represents an overview of the electronic library today—and what it is likely to look like in the next few years. The status of the reference librarian in this new age is considered as is the place of the average person seeking information. Enough background information is presented to help the beginner make sense out of today’s changing library and equal changes in an information society.

The section, “Libraries and the Wiring of America” continues with the Internet and related information channels. The importance of document delivery and interlibrary loan in future reference service is another major theme.

The third large section is devoted to chapters on the reference interview and various methods of searching. Here the primary focus is on the role of the librarian as mediator, as the person who filters out the useful information for the hapless or even well-informed client. Given this role, the searching process changes. Attention is given primarily to the search for content rather than technology. It is the author’s contention that whether the required data are on a CD-ROM, online, in print, or part of a multimedia disc the important factor is what

it contains or does not contain. The technologies which carry the message are important and today's reference librarian must be as familiar with computers and software as the databases themselves. Instruction and aid in using computers will become more and more a daily part of reference services.

The fourth and final section, "Instruction and Policies," contains two chapters. Beginning with the pros and cons of bibliographical and computer instruction, the section moves on to a consideration of reference service policies and methods of evaluation.

Students and teachers alike should be aware that much of the material covered in this book is updated, argued, and dutifully considered in several basic journals. *RQ*, the official voice of reference librarians of the American Library Association, excels in its coverage of the topics considered here. *Library Journal*, while more general, now offers excellent and timely articles on the new technology and its influence on librarians. Numerous features in *The Wilson Library Bulletin*, and particularly Jim Rettig's running document on new reference works, make the journal a necessary part of every reference librarian's reading. *The Reference Librarian*, edited by the author of this text, publishes specific discussions of single topics in each issue. These range from online reference services, to personnel, to problems of evaluation. And, not to be missed, is the nicely edited, always useful, and sometimes downright inspirational *Reference Services Review*. There are other journals in addition to these basic ones, of course. Many from *College & Research Libraries* to *Computers in Libraries* to *Online* are found in the footnotes and in the "Suggested Reading" section at the end of each chapter. Knowledge of the rapid changes in the field is not easily acquired. One must keep up to survive; a painless method of doing just that is to read current issues of these journals.

Thanks are due to the reviewers of this book: Eileen Abels, University of Maryland; Bahal El-Hadidy, University of South Florida; Ellen Getleson, University of Pittsburgh; Doug Raeber, University of Missouri; and Antonio Rodriguez-Buckingham, University of Mississippi. Thanks are also due to the editors of this volume, Bill McLane and particularly Ronda Angel whose diligence and imagination have vastly improved this edition. Thanks also to the indexer.

**William A. Katz**

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# **PART I**

## INTRODUCTION





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## CHAPTER ONE

### REFERENCE SERVICE AND THE COMMUNITY



Studies of the American way of life agree on three points: (1) Society is becoming more stratified, more polarized, with the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated wider apart than in any time in our history. (2) Limited cognitive skills are associated with lack of proper education, lack of information, and a myriad of social problems. (3) In a period of increasing stratification by income and ability, the library and other educational institutions may act as a bridge between the entrenched social poles.

Out of masses of statistical data, a truism is constant: The more income, education, and stability, the more likely an individual will turn to a library for information, education, and recreation. As the income-education-stability level rises in a community, so does library use. Conversely, in many urban areas where income, education, and stability are low, the library is usually underfinanced and underused. The paradox is obvious: The more people need a library, if only to gain information about better jobs and education, the less it is fiscally prepared or relevant to the community. The division between the information rich and information poor seems to be increasing.

The liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith sums up the situation: "We have a modern reserve army of the masses consisting of the poverty-stricken population in the central cities. . . . There must be opportunity for escape from the underclass. . . . Nothing else is so important [as education]. . . . There is in our time no well-educated literate population that is poor, and there is no illiterate population that is other than poor."<sup>1</sup> A conservative scholar, Kevin Philips, underlines the situation: "The problems include a growing gap

<sup>1</sup>"The Good Society Has No Underclass," *The Guardian Weekly*, February 6, 1994, p. 23.

in income between the top fifth and the bottom fifth, as well as rising rates of poverty among children and the increased need of people for health and unemployment insurance increases.”<sup>2</sup> Whether to help bridge the chasm between the poor, the rich, and the suburban middle class (where by 1996 the majority of Americans live) is a decision the public, the school, and to a lesser extent the academic libraries must make. That decision depends as much upon the attitude of the community served as the librarian setting the policy.

### Library Role

The primary role of the library is educational. Traditionally, this has been the attitude, if not always the realization, of library reference librarians. It is a view shared by the American public which believes that an important role of a library is as an education center and research center. An average of 85 percent of Americans see the public library as: (1) an educational support for students of all ages (88 percent); (2) a learning center for adult independent learners (85 percent); (3) a discovery and learning center for preschool children (83 percent). The other role of the library as “a recreational reading center of popular materials and best-sellers” was down the list (under 45 percent).<sup>3</sup>

The library exists to serve the community. No one will argue with that platitude, although almost everyone has a somewhat different definition of *community*. People accept that the public library serves the public, and the school and academic libraries serve students and teachers. Beyond these generalizations, it is necessary to look at America as a community in terms of income, education, and interests. This type of broad profile is helpful in defining the local community in order to understand who the library serves—and does not serve. Major demographic trends include:

1. In terms of income (mid-1990s), 30 percent of American families make under \$20,000 a year, and of the one-third, 13 percent makes \$10,000 or less.<sup>4</sup> At the other extreme, 10 percent of American families have more than \$100,000, with 2 percent making over \$200,000 a year. Slightly over 50 percent, or what some term the “middle class,” are in the \$20,000 to \$75,000 bracket. That 50 percent is divided into 14 percent from \$20,000 to \$30,000; 20 percent from \$30,000 to \$50,000; and 16 percent from \$50,000 to \$75,000.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>How Is America . . . ? *The New York Times*, December 25, 1992, p. 12E.

<sup>3</sup>*The Bowker Annual* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1994), pp. 430–431. A Gallup poll is quoted.

<sup>4</sup>*The Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Various 1990s issues consulted.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Treasury Department Office of Tax Analysis (figures printed in *The New York Times*, December 25, 1994, p. E1). Within large urban areas, such as New York City, the differences are even more marked. The median annual income of the poorest fifth in New York, for example, is \$21,602 as compared with \$175,000 for the richest fifth. *The New York Times*, April 17, 1995, pp. A1, D4, reported that the inequality in wealth in the United States is now greater than in any of the Western rich nations.

2. With respect to education, 24.2 percent of Americans now have a college degree, as compared with 7.7 percent in 1960. Another 25.1 percent (ages 25 to 64) list themselves as having had "some college." To use another comparison, in recent years about 2.2 million freshmen enroll each autumn, whereas some 1.1 million seniors graduate each spring. Approximately 70 to 75 percent have graduated from high school as compared with 40 percent in 1960.

3. The average SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) score has dropped since 1965 from 466 to 424 in verbal aptitude; and 492 to 466 in mathematics.

4. Figures vary from a high of 50 percent to a low of 2 or 3 percent, but a vast number of Americans are illiterate, or border on being so. No one can say with authority how many adults are functionally illiterate, but the most widely held estimate is that from 23 to 27 million people, nearly 10 percent of the nation's population, cannot read and write well enough to meet the basic requirements of everyday life. At the current rate of decline, something like 2 million people each year are added to the illiteracy pool.<sup>6</sup>

### **Books—Computers—Reading**

Americans seem to be less and less involved with information, but the sales of books, magazines, and computers have increased. The statistics are impressive in terms of volume. Related data in regard to demographics (who, for example, is buying all those books, all those computers) have yet to be analyzed.

1. Total book sales have increased from \$10.5 billion in 1970 to close to \$17 billion in 1995. And the amount spent on newspapers and magazines for the same time span has almost doubled. Comparatively, by the mid-1990s the amount spent on video and audio equipment and personal computers stands at \$71 billion as compared with \$8.8 billion in 1970.

The Book Industry Study Group, in 1995, issued a report on book trends which indicates that Americans continue to spend considerable money on books each year. The 1995 average was \$79.22, compared with \$56.35 for recorded music and \$72.97 for home videos. In 1997 it is estimated the amount will jump to \$93.91 and in 1999 to \$107.19. Total book sales in 1997 will be about \$27.5 billion and \$33 billion in 1999 as compared with \$23.8 billion in 1994. At the same time the number of printed books sold will be about the same because with electronic publishing more books will go digital. Spending increases because of rising costs of books, not necessarily because more people purchase printed titles.

2. A Gallup poll indicates that on average Americans spend about 6 percent of their leisure time reading—and this includes newspapers and magazines

<sup>6</sup>*The New York Times*, September 9, 1993, pp. 1, 22. This is a summary of the U.S. Department of Education report, based on a sampling among 26,000 Americans. It follows the same department's by now famous study, "A Nation at Risk," released in 1983. Things have not improved.



as well as books and gazing at computer screens. Comparatively, out of an average of about 5.5 hours of leisure, about one-third of that time is given over to television.<sup>7</sup> In terms of expenditures for reading, about two-thirds is for magazines and newspapers, while another third goes to reference works and general books.

**3.** Basic reference materials in the home have decreased considerably since a 1971 study. Then it was found that close to 40 percent of all nine-year-olds said their families had newspapers, books, magazines, and encyclopedias at home. By 1995 the figure had dropped to 30 percent—and is still dropping.

**4.** Computers, with possible reference materials available (particularly on CD-ROM and through consumer networks such as Prodigy), are found in some 33 million homes. The number increases each month, each year, and is expected to reach at least 50 million by the late 1990s. Only about one-tenth use the computer for what might be called reference. At the same time, the new technologies, from CD-ROMs to online searches, have helped increase the number of people *expecting* library reference services. There are more requests on how to use the technologies than on how to locate data. The catch is that most of the computers and related items in a library are used by people who always go to the library.

**5.** In the early 1980s, there were wide reports of a decrease in student reading, writing, and science skills. A long-standing argument has gone on ever since about what is to be done, if anything. By the mid-1990s the overall picture could be found in various studies and reports from the U.S. Department of Education. The primary points: (a) Students spend more time watching television than reading. (b) Those who do read show a marked lack of proficiency in understanding what is read. (c) Only 2 percent of eleventh-graders write well enough to meet national goals. Summarizing the role of young people on the information highway Secretary of Education Richard Reilly commented: "Holding our own in the information age is simply not good enough. It just doesn't cut it any more. . . . Virtually all 13 and 17 year old's can read, write, add, subtract and count their change. But as one moves up the scale toward slightly more complicated tasks, student success fall off rapidly."<sup>8</sup>

**6.** In the early 1990s a group of University of Pennsylvania students surveyed 3119 undergraduates at their campus and at seven other Ivy League colleges. Half the students were unable to (a) name their home state senators and (b) name the Speaker of the House. One-third did not know the name of England's prime minister or that Alan Greenspan was the chairman of the Federal

<sup>7</sup>Gallup data based on a survey of 6000 Americans aged sixteen and older conducted June 1990 through June 1992. *The New York Times*, May 9, 1993, p. 2E.

<sup>8</sup>"U.S. Students Are Found Gaining Only in Science," *The New York Times*, August 18, 1994, p. A14; April 28, 1995, p. A18.